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INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 7348
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 8582
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ JAN LIMA 4646
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 9889
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 5300
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 000416

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TAGS: [KJUS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: CATHOLIC PRIEST ON HUMANITARIAN ACCORD, ELN-FARC
CLASHES

Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer.
Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) Secretary General of the Commission on National Reconciliation Father Dario Echeverri told us on January 17 he is trying to reach senior FARC leaders to discuss a possible humanitarian accord based on the December 2005 European proposal, but he has not received a response. Echeverri said political operator Alvaro Leyva is now trying to convince the FARC to release one of the U.S. hostages to be a witness at Simon Trinidad's trial in the U.S. Echeverri said he traveled to Arauca in early December in an effort to mediate ELN-FARC clashes over control of coca fields. End Summary.

Attempts to Reach FARC Leadership

¶2. (C) Secretary General of the Commission on National Reconciliation Father Dario Echeverri told us on January 17 he sent a letter on January 4 to FARC supreme leader Manuel Marulanda offering to meet him and other FARC secretariat members to discuss a possible humanitarian accord on the basis of the December 2005 European proposal. President of the Colombian Episcopal Conference Monsignor Luis Augusto Castro would also participate. In the letter, Echeverri mentions that he has discussed a humanitarian accord initiative with the U.S., Spanish, and Italian Bishops Conferences. To date, Echeverri has received no FARC response.

¶3. (C) Echeverri said Monsignor Castro declined an invitation from a French group to participate in a conference on January 20-21 in Paris on ways to restart talks on an accord. Echeverri said he consulted with the French Ambassador who told him the conference was a "private" initiative and did not urge Castro to attend. Political operator Alvaro Leyva and two members of the San Egidio community were also reportedly invited. Echeverri said Leyva is now trying to convince the FARC to release one of the U.S.

hostages to be a witness at Simon Trinidad's trial in the U.S.

FARC and ELN Clashes

¶3. (C) Echeverri said he had traveled to Arauca--at the invitation of German Briceno (AKA "Grannobles")--in early December to meet with the FARC leader to discuss Church efforts to mediate the armed dispute between the ELN and FARC. He met with some FARC members, but failed to meet with Grannobles apparently due to a mix-up between two FARC fronts. Echeverri said he would make another effort to meet with Grannobles in the future.

¶4. (C) Echeverri said the ELN-FARC conflict continues to spill over into Venezuela, as well as in Narino and Valle. Two Venezuelan Jesuits met Echeverri on December 27 to seek his help on ways to control the growing ELN-FARC violence in upper Apure state in Venezuela. The Jesuits said the GOV would not take action, and they did not know where to turn. Echeverri said ELN negotiators Juan Carlos Cuellar and Francisco Galan had separately urged him to meet with FARC commanders in Valle de Cauca to try to dampen the growing violence; he is trying to do so.

¶5. (C) Echeverri said the chief cause of the ELN-FARC fighting is a ar over control of coca fields. He said that despite the Central Command's (COCE) public anti-drug stance, ELN fronts are increasingly involved in narcotrafficking. This could become another obstacle to an ELN peace process.

He speculated that the international community, which he said had always downplayed the group's narco activities in the interests of a peace accord, might soon be forced to view the ELN as a narcotrafficking group.

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